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HINTS TO YOUNG STUDENTS OF OCCULTISM

L. W. ROGERS

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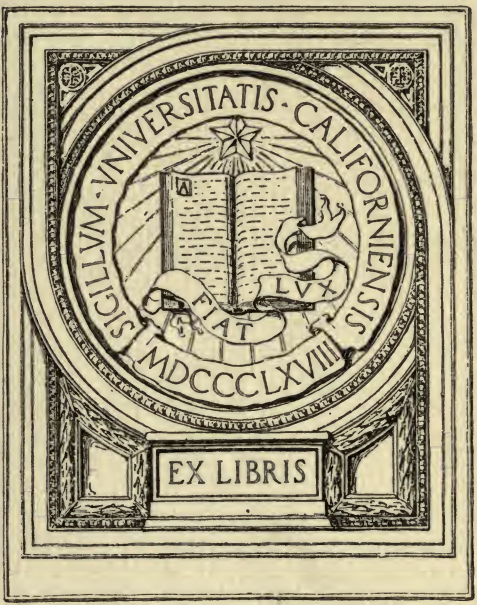

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Yours faithfully,

L W Rogers.

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Hints to Young Students of Occultism

BY
L. W. ROGERS

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PREFACE

The growing interest in the higher life, and the general search for information that is helpful in attaining it, is sufficient reason for the publication of this little book. The purpose has not been to write of the subject in hand either exhaustively or systematically but to put forward helpful suggestions for taking some easy steps in self-development.

Many who earnestly desire to escape from the bondage of the lower nature, and rise to spiritual illumination, are at a loss how to proceed, or even how to practically apply to daily life the occult information they may have gained by general reading. This little volume is an effort to assist them—hints on how to utilize time and energy—a few guide-boards in the evolu-

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tionary wilderness at doubtful turns in the road, indicating the advantageous way to go and displaying warning signs across some attractive by-ways that lead to perilous places.

Hints to Young Students of Occultism

Chapter I.

INTRODUCTORY

The young student of occultism—he who is just beginning to learn that there is a deeper meaning in life than he had suspected—who has but recently come into contact with Theosophy's explanation of the purpose of life and the method of human evolution—often has the idea that there is some particular bit of information which, if he can but secure it, will enable him to quickly develop clairvoyance and rise into the possession of great spiritual power. He has an impression that there are certain formu-

las which the teachers can hand over to him, if they will, that can be used as a key to unlock the storehouse of occult knowledge. If the beginner would make rapid progress in evolving the divine powers within him he should put aside such notions and realize at once that all any teacher can do for him is to point out the way in which he can help himself and that knowledge of the path to be followed will come to him in exact proportion to the earnestness of his desire to find it. He should remember, too, that there are precepts to practice as well as knowledge to gain. It is extremely important for him to study the literature of occultism, to read and to learn all he possibly can from those who have information to impart, but something more is necessary. As he acquires these spiritual truths he must strive to live them, to shape his daily life by them. Fortunate indeed is he who can

make his inner spiritual development keep pace with his intellectual acquirement of the facts. To discover a spiritual truth and then make no use of it in the evolution of one's character is quite as bad, if not worse, than to remain in ignorance of it; for responsibility is measured by opportunity.

The idea that anybody can put the beginner quickly into possession of spiritual power is as erroneous as it would be to suppose that by handing him a diploma a university president can give a young man an education. This notion that Theosophy has occult wealth to be handed over in a lump sum—to be conferred instead of earned—is usually accompanied with the desire to be conspicuously helpful, to quickly undertake some work, the benevolence of which is at least equaled by its dramatic method; to become one of the invisible helpers

who has the power to work in his astral body during the hours when the physical body is asleep. That is a most laudable ambition and a worthy thing to attain. But the point that should be understood about it is that the way to it is through actual spiritual development and not by the immediate opening of astral sight. The first step toward being an invisible helper is to become a visible helper, to cultivate the desire to help by exercising our benevolent impulses on the human beings about us. When we have actually become of service on the physical plane, when we have utilized the opportunities of our daily life to assist others, and have thus proven that the thing we really desire is to be helpful and not merely to possess occult power, we shall have taken the first necessary step in the realization of our ambition.

If the beginner is anxious to know how rapidly he is getting on in spirit-

ual development he has only to watch his daily life. His first work is to get control of his physical body and make it obey his will. Therefore if he can see that he is growing less irritable, that trifling things are losing their power to annoy him, that he is not so easily thrown off his balance as he used to be, he knows that his will is becoming established in its power to direct the physical and astral mechanism through which it functions. It is always to the little things, rather than to great events, that he should look as tests of the new powers he is developing. His fitness to pass the portal, later in his evolution, toward which he is now directing his first uncertain steps, is not determined by one supreme occasion, like an examination for entering some university, so much as it is being determined by the thoughts and desires of his daily life; and it is the little things, the small

problems of the daily life that are hourly testing his judgment, his sincerity, his courage and his patience. Unless he begins to be successful in meeting these he cannot hope to become even a candidate for greater tests of his powers.

There are many ways in which the young student of occultism can begin the cultivation of the character qualities he must possess before he can go far in his efforts at conscious evolution,—scores of things he can do in the line of character building that will lay an enduring foundation for the spiritual power he would attain; and let it be well understood that all such work done in the beginning will save him much trouble, and give him great satisfaction, later on. The reward for his pains will be rich indeed. He who erects a fine building upon a weak and illy-constructed foundation is no more foolish than he who does careless work

in the foundation he lays for his temple not built with hands. Every flaw in the foundation is a menace for the future; and is not that precisely why the testing is so constant and continuous? The things that ceaselessly test us, that sometimes appear to bar our further progress, should be as welcome as the ring of the inspector's hammer on the car-wheels before one's train leaves the station, or as the test of plumb and square in the house-builder's operations.

SELF EXAMINATION.

An excellent thing for one to do when he is first coming into a knowledge of Theosophy, and is beginning to seek the way forward by its guiding light, is to ask himself in what particular traits he is lacking and then earnestly set about acquiring them. It is usually not difficult to find some weak

points. Is there sound moral courage? Does he ever fear to express an opinion that he feels ought to be expressed, but which he knows to be unpopular? Is he firm in defense of the truth, as he sees it, or does he take refuge in silence when he instinctively feels that he should speak? Moral courage he must have and he should begin to inspect his daily conduct and seek to strengthen his character in this direction. And so he may run down the scale of his virtues and his frailties, critically examining each point, until he comes to things we usually consider as of no importance. Is he careless about the waste of time? Does he realize the value of every hour of his waking consciousness? Has he begun to understand the fact that the average man fritters away in an aimless sort of fashion by far the larger part of his physical lifetime, and makes but correspondingly feeble progress, instead

of which he could, if he would, so use that wasted time that it would count tremendously in quickening his evolution? If he does understand that fact he will begin to take account of his waking hours and ask what he has to show for them. He will scrupulously cultivate the habits of promptness and punctuality. If he has an appointment at a certain hour he will not arrive fifteen minutes later, nor five minutes later. If he has letters requiring replies he will not permit them to lie about unanswered awaiting the vague and uncertain time when he happens to feel like writing. Among his earliest lessons should be this fact: that procrastination is not only "the thief of time" but also of other people's time and that responsibility for careless conduct by no means ends with his personal loss. In many directions he will find opportunities, if he seeks them, to strengthen his character and perfect

his armor against the coming day of a mighty conflict. Great things are possible only to strong souls and it is from the trivial events of daily life that strength is won. Until we have become masters of the little things there is nothing great awaiting us.

Chapter II.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTENTION

Perhaps it would be impossible to exaggerate the importance of the thing we call "attention." It should be assiduously cultivated in every possible way. Whatever is being done should be done with an undivided mind, whether it is important or trivial. Attention to the work in hand is not only the first step toward success with that particular bit of work but is also a step in actual occult development. To study a subject for a half hour with unwavering attention accomplishes more than to follow it a half day with a wandering mind; and while we are thus gaining knowledge rapidly by de-

terminedly sustained attention we are doing something more. We are bringing the mind into the particular condition it must reach before any marked progress in occultism is possible.

The mental habit of most people reminds one of a kitten at play. It strikes at a swinging string, catches up a bit of paper, leaps into the air after a fly, then darts into another room to dash from object to object in a new field, all for no other purpose than because it has nothing more serious in life to attend to. So it is with the wandering mind. It fills up the time with a multitude of trifling thoughts that, all summed up in the end, amount to simply nothing. It occupies itself with dreamy speculations about nothing in particular, darts backward to uselessly run over a recent conversation, leaps off to review a journey made a week ago, dallies over a remembered remark by a friend, sud-

denly recalls a duty not discharged, forgets it the next instant because a carriage passes the window, and then dashes off on some entirely new round of equally frivolous mental activities that are as devoid of connection with the first set as they are of method or purpose.

Such a state of mind belongs to that period of our existence when we had no knowledge of the purpose of life. It is not becoming to the student of Theosophy and he should, without any loss of time, begin an earnest effort to free himself from so pernicious a mental habit. A good way to accomplish this is to endeavor to keep the mind steadily upon the work in hand, whether it is reading, writing, talking, listening, or discharging some simple duty. When it is some pastime or recreation, to which attention is turned for rest, the mind should be fully given up to it and kept entirely away from

the work that has been temporarily dropped.

Attention is the very gist of occult progress. It is impossible to imagine anybody getting on without acquiring it; and the way to acquire it to the degree that makes it effective is to keep constantly at it in all the little things we do until it becomes an ingrained and deep-seated habit. Is not attention the very basis upon which occult development rests? Take as an example telepathy, with which most people have had more or less experience. You are about to say something when your friend says it for you. You have decided to move a chair or open a window, but before you can rise your companion requests you to do that particular thing. You have not thought for a week about purchasing a certain needed article when it comes into your mind suddenly, but before your thought can frame itself into words

your companion brings up the subject. Very often you both speak the same words at the same instant about the same thing. Very often, too, you know precisely what another is going to say just before he utters it. Now, this occurs when the mind is not disturbed by other thoughts and things. We cannot imagine a person getting the thought of another when his own mind is galloping about among other subjects. How can he get what another is thinking when he does not even get what he is saying? But we can imagine telepathy being cultivated by close and sympathetic attention. We can imagine a person listening so intently to another's conversation and getting so completely into his line of thought that he gets his ideas before they are expressed in words. Such centered and sustained attention necessarily cultivates sensitiveness.

A very good time for cultivating the

attention is while listening to a discourse. An especial effort can be made to get every idea expressed by the speaker; and if, as sometimes happens, the ideas are not numerous, to give the closest attention to all that is said, keeping mental account of the points as they are developed without losing anything that is being stated. Whether one agrees with the speaker or not should not be permitted to impair the attention. In either case the mind should be held unwaveringly upon the discourse, so firmly and persistently that there is no opportunity for other things to intrude. If the ideas come from the speaker too slowly to occupy the mind it can be kept busy reviewing the points thus far made, or even in speculating upon what are likely to come, but in any case it should be kept to the speaker and his subject with the greatest care. The attention should not be permitted to

fail from the moment he rises until he has finished. This attention should be absolute. If somebody enters or leaves the room disregard it. Try to see nothing but the speaker and hear nothing but his discourse, until it is finished. If this practice should, at first, prove trying it need not be continued throughout an entire sermon or lecture. But for such length of time as may be decided upon the attention should be rigorously sustained. If the discourse is a good one much more will thus be learned from it. If it is of the order that bores one it will be robbed of much, if not all, of its oppressiveness; for when the mind is concentrated upon it, and busy speculating about it, time does not hang heavily, but passes without notice. An unfailing method of shortening the apparent time of any discourse is to concentrate the attention upon it.

ORIGINAL THINKING.

Another thing which the young student should take up is the matter of original thinking. Naturally he will read much of occultism in the books written by occultists, and he will have a tendency to fall into their style of expression. When he prepares a paper on a theosophical subject he will usually find, upon critically examining his work, that he has set forth much the same points, in much the same way, with the same degree of emphasis and with the same kind of illustrations that his authors have used. Often he unconsciously falls into almost precisely the same expressions. All this is work in an imitative rut, from which he should make a determined effort to extricate himself. No matter how admirable the work of the teacher is the student does not desire to become either a copyist or a parrot. He does

not want his mind to get the habit of running only along the grooves fashioned by others and then not running at all when it reaches the end of the groove. To avoid this misfortune he should read only for a short time and then stop and ponder well the ideas presented. Let him try to find various points of view and see if he cannot think of something more to be said on the matter. He can call up in his mind some of his experiences that are in line with the statement of principles given and ponder over the corroboration thus furnished. When he discusses with others what he has read let him try to avoid the exact language used by the author and put the thought into original expressions of his own. He should endeavor to think out original illustrations to illuminate the subject, and new sets of circumstances to which the principles stated will apply; and the way to do it is to think, and think,

and think, about it. Original thinking is an invaluable accomplishment and the only reason why there is not more of it is because there are so few who are willing to give it the necessary time and effort.

Chapter III.

PERSISTENT AND REGULAR EFFORT

Another matter which the student who is just entering upon the study of occultism should have well settled in his mind in the beginning is the necessity for hard work. Whoever starts out with the notion that indifferent and desultory study of the subject will carry him through is foredoomed to failure; and he who imagines that by galloping through the literature of occultism, as he would read a collection of novels, he can become an occultist will be nearly as far from his goal when he finishes as when he began. He may give to his occult studies much time or little, as he will. That is not the point. The important thing is that

whether the period be several hours a day or but one hour, or even the half of it, it should be characterized by that mental energy that is the natural result of an eager desire and a steady purpose. Half-hearted work is but little better than no work. Without hard work the student's progress will be discouragingly slow. That is true of all our undertakings. Why should it not be true of occultism? The university student who makes rapid progress in law, or medicine, or mathematics, or languages, is he who works hard. Genius is only the essence of hard labor. It may have been performed in a past life but that does not alter the fact. We have no faculties that we have not made and every mental effort now is determining our intellectual accomplishments of the future, as well as accelerating present progress.

Not only should we work with wide-awake energy but we should work with

persistence and regularity if we would get on. Regularity has a magic of its own. A given amount of energy put forth regularly, steadily, produces enormously more than the same amount of energy put forth irregularly, spasmodically. Let the young student set aside each day a certain time for occult studying and thinking, and permit no break in the work, and he will make gratifying progress. The difficulty of quickly getting down to work grows less and less. The art of becoming absorbed in the subject matter becomes easier and easier. Soon he finds that his hour or half-hour, as the case may be, counts in results out of all proportion to the time recorded by the clock. But let him make the mistake of giving occult studies two hours today, nothing tomorrow, fifteen minutes the next day, nothing more for a week, then a full day "to make up for lost time," with such

future chance periods as convenience may dictate—make it the sport of circumstance and the dependent of caprice—and a sum total of many more hours will take him a much less distance on his spiritual journey. By the first method he gets into the current of regularity and it carries him along with a sort of cumulative momentum. He is really entering upon a new moral and intellectual life—acquiring a new viewpoint, a new standard of measures, setting up new habits of consciousness—and a certain inertia has to be overcome. By regularity he not only gets into the new stride quickly but does not wholly lose it during the intervening hours; while by the second method he not only loses it but loses most of his study time in getting back to it. He has the inertia to overcome again and again and spends most of his time making new starts instead of making progress.

Regularity in the study of occultism counts heavily for progress in still another way. Such study is usually taken up by the beginner after he has seen or heard something that has aroused his interest in the subject. It may be some occult experience, or a conversation with a friend, or on account of psychic phenomena in a newspaper, or a lecture on Theosophy. Something has aroused a temporary interest. Now, if he sets out with a plan and purpose and decides in advance that he will follow a fixed program of daily study there is a fair chance that he will acquire a permanent interest in the matter before his enthusiasm wanes. But if he has no prearranged program, and only decides to utilize for such reading and study the idle time that he may chance to have in the coming days, he is extremely likely to permit one thing after another to push aside his occult studies

until his interest slowly fades out and his golden opportunity is gone. It *is* a golden opportunity when any human being is, by any occurrence whatever, brought into contact with occult teaching; and fortunate indeed are those who realize it and promptly act upon it. It may mean to them, at its very least, all the difference there is between many happy, useful lives and many very commonplace ones, although it may appear on the surface to be a trivial matter whether one follows up such an opportunity at once or not. Trifles at the starting point may represent great differences further along. Two rain-drops may fall nearly together at the top of a mountain range and yet, because one strikes the eastern slope and the other the western, ultimately find their way into different oceans. Those who have a fondness for such analysis have often shown that great events have turned

on the pivots of trifles. The difference between adopting a regular program for daily occult study and adopting another that is lawless and erratic is one of those apparent trifles that serves as a pivot on which a destiny may turn.

ENTHUSIASM.

Enthusiasm is a thing of priceless value. Somebody has defined it as the power of God made manifest in a human being. Whatever else it may be it is certainly a great motor power, a force that carries one forward and upward. The difference between a person filled with enthusiasm about occultism and another who is not is the difference between life and death. One is asleep to everything but his material surroundings. The other is awake, aroused, in touch with the life currents of the universe. The chief

work of the theosophical lecturer is to arouse such enthusiasm—to so present spiritual facts to the minds that can receive them that the recognition of universal truth kindles the divine fire within. With those who have reached a certain point in evolution this flame of enthusiasm will burn steadily, however feebly, and they may fortunately walk in the light for the remainder of this incarnation. With many others it will slowly subside, leaving them, however, more susceptible to future stimuli. Happy indeed is that truth seeker who resolves upon a program of daily study and, while the flame of his new enthusiasm still burns, gets settled into the fixed habit that will carry him safely to the point where his temporary interest has become permanent.

Chapter IV.

THOUGHT ASSIMILATION IS ESSENTIAL TO SOUL GROWTH

The student of Theosophy should read much but think more. He could get along without reading if books on occultism could not be had, but he could not get on without thinking if all the books ever written were at hand. There is a close analogy between the growth of the physical body and the growth of the soul. For the body to grow requires both eating and digestion. Of course there can be no bodily growth whatever without digestion and assimilation. By digestion the food is reduced to the condition in which it is available for body building and by assimilation it is built in.

And precisely so it is with soul expansion. The raw material of facts, principles and experiences must undergo a certain process before they are available for soul growth. Reading and observing are merely the acts of collecting soul food. If we do nothing more it is as though one should eat when, through some physiological derangement, the function of digestion is suspended. There could then be no gain to him from it and no growth on account of it. The mind is to the soul what the stomach is to the physical body—the laboratory of preparation. The mind takes the accumulation of facts, principles, observations and experiences, and from the whole mass extracts conceptions, new views of things, new understandings of life—extracts the very gist of the totality of perception, and this essence of the whole is then ready for assimilation by the soul, ready to be built into the

causal body. By the action of the mind the rough material for soul growth has been transmuted and made available; and without such action that material in the rough could no more be utilized for soul growth than fruits and vegetables, as such, can be built into the physical body. Mind action, then, is not merely important; it is absolutely necessary.

Whatever the time may be that one can set apart for occult studies each day there should be a reasonable portion of it given up exclusively to quiet thought into which no reading is permitted to intrude. It is a common error for those just becoming interested in Theosophy to bury themselves in some book during every moment that can be snatched from pressing duties. This eager desire to read everything on the subject within reach is most commendable and the burning zeal that grasps at every possible ac-

quisition foreshadows rapid progress; but the sooner that zeal is directed into channels along which it may make the most of the energy expended the better. To this end a certain definite time should be determined upon for quiet thinking about the higher life. A half-hour is little enough but twenty, or even ten, minutes is much better than nothing. The hour at which it is desirable will naturally vary with the habits and duties of different people; but it should be at that part of the day when there is the most freedom from one's daily activities and the least liability to interruption. Noon time may be desirable for some. Early twilight may be better for others. The hour of retiring for the night will probably be the most convenient for many. This time for quiet thought should not be made a substitute for morning meditation, if the student is fortunate enough to be giving a few

minutes to that shortly after rising. It should be a period of tranquil thinking and aspiration rather than of strenuous will-compelling mental effort. The mind can dwell upon what has been read during the day and the facts and principles set forth by the author, or at least some of them, can be recalled, pondered over and applied to what one knows of life through personal experience. A part of the time can be given to the experiences of the past twenty-four hours. The mind can run back over the winding path traversed during that time, the people met, the things said, done, thought and desired, and each can be considered in the light of the higher life. Was the conduct all that could be desired? Was any opportunity to be helpful overlooked? Was any word spoken that were better unsaid? Was any thought entertained that should not have been harbored? In short, did

you live up to your highest aspiration or was there a weak point to be carefully strengthened for the morrow? In thus pondering over the reading and the events of the day, and renewing the determination to live up to the highest one can conceive, the half hour speeds swiftly and pleasantly past and by the wondrous alchemy of mental action experience is transmuted into spiritual strength.

The entire time of this meditative fragment of the day should not be given to retrospective thought. At least a few minutes should always be devoted to pondering over the inner life and the purpose of existence. This will prove a source of real strength—a living spring of progressive energy. Think upon the desirability of the higher life and of the transitory nature of everything in the visible world. Reflect upon the swift flight of time, the ever-increasing speed with which the

years are rolling by; upon the fact that the physical life is as short as it is important and that whoever would use it wisely has no time to lose from what remains. Consider the utter uselessness of striving for wealth, of accumulating a fortune, large or small, of giving more attention to the physical body than will keep it in health and comfort; and remember that all energy, beyond that, expended upon physical things, to accumulate them and take care of them, is worse than wasted; for it is thought and energy invested in the perishable—time and energy that could be utilized in the useful work of helping others forward, which incidentally builds into your own soul the things that do not perish but which will multiply your strength and widen your field for future lives. Reflect upon the fact that warm friendships are superior to material possessions; upon the desir-

ability of sterling character qualities; upon the fact that every virtue, grace, power and attribute of character built into one's self during this physical life becomes an eternal possession—a never-failing source of sunshine and joyousness through all future lives. Recall the most care-free, joyous, exalted moments of your conscious existence and reflect that that condition should be your normal physical life—that life rightly lived *is joy,* although the vast majority do not suspect it, and that a far happier life than the imagination can picture can be yours in the near future if the aspiration to live up to the highest that is in you is assiduously cultivated. For at least a few moments daily give free rein to your imagination and let it picture the future field of your activities —build the stage upon which you shall play the drama of your lives. Refuse to live within the narrow walls of this

one incarnation. Sweep them aside and realize that this little life is but the dull and gloomy morning of the coming radiant day. Plan not for this small hour but count the lives that lie ahead as a part, with this, of one imposing whole. Look forward to future lives as youth looks forward to maturity. Make your plans for the remainder of this incarnation as in the closing period of school years one plans his life's career, shaping his present energies to serve his future purpose. This daily glimpse of wider fields in which the seeds of present thought shall blossom into deeds of worth in future lives will, in time, fan the faintest aspirations into steady flame and give to the inner life a reality that enables the student to comprehend something of the delusive character of the physical existence with its false standards that lead the unwary astray.

Chapter V.

SAFE AND DANGEROUS MENTAL CONDITIONS

In the previous chapter it was suggested that the time set aside daily for reviewing the events of the preceding hours and pondering over the meaning of life and its varied problems should be a period of tranquil thought and aspiration. Perhaps it may not be amiss to add that the word "tranquil" should not be taken to mean the passivity that characterizes the trance medium who is about to pass "under control." To assume that attitude of mind is to abandon oneself to the psychic circumstances of the moment, without the slightest opportunity of judging whether they may be good or bad. It would be much as though

a blind man who could swim but little should fling himself upon the tide, not knowing whether it would carry him into water that was safe and comfortable or into a dangerous undertow. The student's will should always be in control. Under no circumstances should it be surrendered to anything or anybody. It is his purpose to know himself and his environment; to obtain first-hand knowledge of the mysteries of life; to purify his vehicles of consciousness and develop his spiritual powers that he may be of the greatest possible assistance in spreading the light and helping others forward. It is not his purpose to evolve the characteristics that will permit others to speak through him—to lend his body to others to be used as an instrument for the communication of information about which he can personally know nothing and the truth or inaccuracy of which he cannot possibly determine.

That sort of thing can well be left to those who desire to engage in it. The way of the student of occultism lies in the opposite direction. He is to learn the mastery of matter and acquire intelligent control of occult forces, not to become an unconscious and helpless automaton in the hands of others. Therefore when he withdraws daily into the quietude of the most retired spot to which he has access and there, alone with his thoughts, calmly and serenely gives himself up to reflections upon the higher life, his mental attitude should be one of reception but not of surrender. He should be as one who listens for the faintest whisper from the depths of being, but who uses discrimination in its testing and reason in its interpretation. He should be at all times mentally and morally awake and alert. He should not be misled by the widespread belief that the invisible world is sharply

divided into two parts and that those who seek information from the realm hidden to physical senses are surely making connections with that part known as heaven when they succeed in establishing communication.

Another common misconception is that all who have died are good and wise, and it is a dangerous one. The chief difference between those we call dead and the rest of us is that they have no physical bodies through which to function in the visible world. As to moral difference there is none; and the astral world certainly presents quite as many grades of moral and intellectual development as the physical life does. The selfishness and depravity that characterize unnumbered thousands here are fully as conspicuous there. Moreover it is the lower and grosser part of the astral world that impinges upon the physical and the facility of communication increases

with the coarseness and materiality of the matter forming the normal habitat of the disembodied intelligence. Therefore, should the student of occultism surrender his physical body to such entities as may desire to take possession of it, the probability of getting information of any value is exceedingly small, while the possibility of coming into contact with most unfortunate influences is great. Nor would the good intentions of the student be a guarantee that this would not occur, any more than the good intentions of an experimenting chemist will insure him against injury if he brings the wrong ingredients together. The outcome for the student would doubtless depend upon the karma of the past and the natural affinity he might, or might not, have for various classes of entities inhabiting the lower levels of the astral world. But, aside from what might occur in such a case, the passive sur-

render of his body to become the instrument of another, no matter how well he might be protected by his karma, is a step in the wrong direction and therefore not progress at all. One purpose of human evolution is to achieve the mastery of matter, to come into perfect control of the vehicles of consciousness. To this end the will must be cultivated, not surrendered; strengthened, not enfeebled.

Chapter VI.

SELF-RELIANCE

One of the things to be constantly aimed at is self-reliance. It should be most assiduously cultivated. The sincere student of occultism is striving to perfect himself as an instrument to be used in quickening human evolution. He may now be serving that sublime purpose in the very humblest way but he will not overlook the fact that great tasks await the willing and capable worker; that volunteers for selfless service are very, very few and that the need of them is great. Therefore he will understand that as rapidly as he can fit himself for effective service the larger tasks will be found at hand, awaiting him. But only those

who have evolved the necessary qualities are available for the work and can hope to be given a part in it; and of what use would one be who has not become self-reliant? Worlds are not shaped with the helpless hands of infants. We must get beyond the clinging, timorous, dependent stage that characterizes children, before we shall be of much real service in the evolutionary work. There is an attitude of mind that means "Well, I'm willing enough but I don't know what to do. I'm ready to work if somebody will furnish me a place." That is much better than indifference but it is not the self-reliant attitude that one should strive to reach. The desirable mental attitude is one of strong, resolute determination to find a way to serve without anybody's help—a desire to be useful, directed by steady, self-reliant purpose.

In the most prosaic affairs of life

and in earth's hurly-burly business grind it is the self-reliant who move the world. The self-reliant man comes to the front in times of difficulty and peril as naturally as oil comes to the surface of water. He belongs there by right of ability to manage, to direct. Being in control of himself he can control events. Being master of himself he is master of the situation. In a crisis all instinctively turn to the masterful man.

One of the divine characteristics of occultism is its absolute justice. Each is exactly what he makes himself and gets precisely what he earns; not a jot less nor more. He merely comes into his own. But he must come in on his own account. He cannot play the role of Micawber in occultism, waiting for "something to turn up" that will carry him into useful and desirable occult work as a political upheaval sometimes carries an indifferent candidate into

office to the surprise of everybody. The successful ones who have made rapid progress in occultism are those who have resolutely forced their way forward. They did not even wait for an opportunity, but made it. The most conspicuous figures in the history of the Theosophical Society are striking examples of what comes of a self-reliant determination to serve; that does not wait even for an invitation to work for the common good. Each created a field and filled it. Colonel Olcott, for example, did not wait for the growth and maturity of an occult society that could furnish him the office of president and thus give him an opportunity to be uniquely useful. He set to work and built the organization, thus becoming signally useful to the world at once. The others did not wait for the western nations to ask for a theosophical literature. They anticipated the demand by producing

a literature that will some day be recognized as marking an epoch in the history of western civilization.

A beginner in the study and practice of Theosophy is often inclined to think that it is only a few who can do important things and the rest are necessarily doomed to be satisfied with looking on and applauding. They forget that a multiplicity of agencies and methods are used to hasten human evolution and that the apparently unimportant things are quite as necessary as those that attract attention. They also forget that those who are doing the great things once stood where the beginner now stands and that the younger student can as certainly reach an equally important and useful field of activities in the future, if he really desires to, and now seeks to be of service in the smaller way. If he puts his hand to the small work now he shall grasp the great task later as certainly

as he lives and thinks. But no one may hope to be entrusted with great responsibilities until he has proved that he is capable of discharging small ones.

Chapter VII.

THE FATAL DELUSION OF DELAY

Some sound advice can be given to seekers after occult wisdom in two words: *act now.* Don't postpone good intentions. The world is full of people who have a vague notion that at some indefinite time and in some dimly comprehended fashion they shall get to the point of being unselfishly useful to the world. Everywhere we meet the people who are going to do something "sometime." One is waiting until real estate takes a "boom" so that the enhanced value of his investments will pay his debts and *then* he will be free to devote himself to theosophical work. Another has ability as a public speaker and, with theosophical knowledge to

impart, could render invaluable service. He realizes it but feels that he must stay in business until he "has made a lot of money," not realizing that he doesn't in the least need a lot of money but that competent and sincere work will win its way. Another has put his financial faith in mines and is only waiting till they develop and *then,* well just wait, something tremendous will happen! This victim of delusion misses the point that a dollar in the hand is worth more than a million in the mine that have not been found. The dollar he really could give might put a theosophical book in a public library or buy a dinner for a hungry family or mend the shoes of a shivering child; but the millions he dreams about will very probably never do anything for him except keep him impoverished in the search for them; and if the highly improbable should occur and they ever really appear they will so engross his

attention in taking care of them that he won't have time to think of anything else. Another tells us he is studying Theosophy carefully and thoroughly and, when he has mastered it, he will begin to teach; quite overlooking the fact that if he were to live a thousand years in this particular life he could not have "mastered it;" and that if he really desires to teach others there are always those at hand to instruct in some way. The test of ability to teach is not the fact that the would-be teacher knows everything but that he knows more than those to be taught. "Every contact is an opportunity."

And thus it is with those who wait. The delusion may have one form or another but the result is the same—inactivity and loss of opportunity. The very fact that they feel that they should do something is the evidence that they have reached the point in evolution where they *must* do something or miss

their opportunity; that is to say, fail in what the Hindu calls their dharma, the next step in their evolution that can be taken along the line of least resistance.

Act now. It is a thousand times better to do a little at once than to decide that a great deal shall be done in the indefinite future. Mexico is sometimes called by travelers the mañana country. The peons who serve you readily agree that anything you desire to have done, shall be done, but—*mañana señor*—tomorrow! Never to-day on any account, if it can be avoided. But to-morrow, oh, yes, *si señor!* anything you like, only not now. And so they sit in the sun, and doze and dream, in serene confidence that it will be easier to-morrow. It is an attitude of mind in perfect keeping with the accompanying poverty of results. It is the same species of delusion that afflicts those of higher

intellectual development who yet do not stop to analyze their own motives and to see the inconsistency of their declarations. Anybody who really will do something in the future will be found doing a little something now—mingling at least a little present performance with his future promises. He will realize that the way to do things is to begin, no matter how feeble the beginning.

Act now. An occult significance invests those two little words. Action is the very expression of life on the physical plane. We are missing the purpose of life by inaction. We are simply marking time, not moving forward in the evolutionary march. So important is action that it is better even to blunder, while trying to do our best, than not to attempt to do anything at all. It is better for an infant to try to walk, and fall, than never to make the venture. The pain of the fall will pass

and a permanent lesson will be learned. In India a mistaken class of devotees withdraw from the world of affairs and by cutting off almost entirely all relationship with the rest of the human race seek through isolation and inaction to avoid responsibility for wrong acts and seek salvation for the self. It is said by occult investigators that they succeed so well in the desire to hold themselves aloof from the race that a terrible isolation is their future fate. Against this foolish course a great spiritual truth was once proclaimed: *"Inaction in a deed of mercy becomes an action in a deadly sin."* And so none may escape his responsibilities to others by withdrawing tortoise-like, into his shell of self-interests.

The second word shares the importance of the first. "Now" signifies the most vital period of all time. The magic of success lies within that little word. The man who procrastinates

necessarily misses opportunities. The very essence of success is the ability to instantly seize and utilize an opportunity. Every event has its "psychological moment." The most momentous affairs of the world swing this way, or that way, with the instantaneous decision of some master mind. On the other hand the results in many a battle and in many a national crisis have been changed and the tide of success turned in the direction of disaster by the hesitation and indecision of one who was the unfortunate victim of procrastination. To form the habit of quick decision and prompt action is to arm oneself with a mighty weapon for successful work; and with the cultivation of such a habit of life gradually comes the ability to recognize the propitious moment when it arrives.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries."

That tide is often at the flood for a moment only and he who, through procrastination, fails to utilize that golden moment has paid dearly for his negligence. Procrastination is one of the fetters that binds, one of the bars that imprisons. If we would make progress worthy of students of occultism we must free ourselves from this encumbrance. We must acquire the art of prompt decision and immediate action. We must not be postponers. We must not be content with resolving that a thing ought to be done, and then quieting the divine insistence of the higher self with the comfortable thought that sometime, somehow, we will do it. We must acquire the beneficient habit of doing things for the common welfare and of doing them now.

Chapter VIII.

THE ONE PROTECTION AGAINST DANGER

There is one thing the young student of occultism should not overlook, for its importance to him is tremendous. He should keep well in mind the fact that the development of the heart qualities is the very essence of real progress. He is likely to have the notion that it is all a matter of acquiring knowledge; that he can settle down to a study of the books and that the information he thus gets will solve all his problems; that there is nothing to do but to acquire a thorough understanding of occult laws and principles. But this is a grave mistake. A mere intellectual grasp of Theosophy will be of little service to him. Indeed, if he does not

live it as well as understand it, then occult knowledge will be a detriment to him. If he uses the information he acquires merely to get more from the material life for himself he would be more fortunate without it. A purely selfish use of anything is unfortunate but a selfish use of occult knowledge is most unfortunate. Such a course leads onward to a very great danger—a peril that increases with every forward step in knowledge that is used for one's self. There may be swift progress in the acquirement of such knowledge but it is not spiritual progress. It is merely intellectual development; and it is only a question of time when the student who follows that course will likely find himself cut off from the life current of Theosophy and left to hug his intellectual idols by the wayside—the most fortunate thing that, under the circumstances, can happen to him. The alternative is that

he may go on in occult development and the acquiring of occult power for selfish use until he has brought upon himself the corrective reaction of nature for such misuse of her gifts—a fate that sums up in one tragedy all the pains, penalties and horrors the imagination can picture.

Of course such a possible *finale* lies in the far away time, along the intellectual road, but that only serves to increase the present danger by making it appear distant, vague and uncertain. But the relationship between beginning and end is as certain as that between the placid waters of the Niagara river and the rushing falls a few miles below. A stranger on those waters, who had never seen the falls, would regard a warning as an impertinence. His boat would move obedient to the oars and there would be no more indication of danger than upon any other river. Should he choose to drift slowly

down the stream he would be a long time reaching the point where his speed would perceptibly increase. Then its steady acceleration would be so gradual that there would be no apparent cause for alarm until it had become too late for possible escape. No less directly connected are the trifling use of occult powers for selfish purposes and the great peril that is related to it. Make no mistakes because the water is placid now. *The falls are ahead, nevertheless,* for all who follow the selfish course.

It is clear, then, that the young student cannot begin too early to consider this danger and to take the precautions that shall insure his safety. Unselfishness will be his protection. By its cultivation he fortifies himself; he insures his safety in advance. He should try to acquire the habit of thinking much of others, and considering their welfare. If he enters the Theosophical

Society the chief reason should be because it gives him an opportunity to help humanity along in its evolution and he should think of the occult information he gets, not as so much personal possession, but as so much added knowledge and power with which to help others along. The desire to help should be cultivated in every possible way until it becomes the habit of the waking consciousness. There is an inner and an outer courtesy. The outer concerns itself with forms. It is conventional and gives skill in social graces and certain rules and usages that prevent friction. It is satisfied if it violates no law. The inner courtesy is born of a real regard for the welfare of others. The person who possesses it is thinking less of the rules and how he shall appear to others than of how he can be helpful to those about him; and nobody does, or can, possess

this inner courtesy until he *feels* right toward other human beings. It is the very blossom of unselfishness. This mental attitude of helpfulness should be constant and enduring. It should be carried through the daily round of occupations. In the home, the office, the street, the Theosophist should be keen and alert for every opportunity to be useful. He should cultivate both the habit of being helpful and the habit of utilizing every opportunity that comes to him to assist others.

CULTIVATING SYMPATHY.

It is said that in all true schools of occultism there is a golden rule that insures the safety of the student; and this rule is that for every step taken in acquiring occult knowledge three steps are to be taken in perfecting character. From this it will easily be seen that it is not enough to cultivate

the habit of helpfulness. It is most excellent and necessary but there should be something more. The student should work steadily at the development of the heart qualities, for his future safety lies there. His sympathy with suffering can be quickened and the heart made to keep pace with the intellect by practical work among the people about him wherever he may be. There are always the sick, the unfortunate, the blind, the aged and feeble. Every community has those who are confined to their homes by illness, accident or old age. Such people spend much time in lonely solitude. Those around them who are not in their condition are too busy to realize the situation. To an active person suddenly confined to a room by accident or by illness the hours of an afternoon spent alone seem endless. To an aged person accustomed to the more sociable ways of the past generation—

who feels that the world has moved on and left him—a call that breaks the monotony of a day with a conversation he can appreciate must be a boon. The student of occultism who is looking for opportunities to be useful and for conditions that will quicken human sympathy need not look far. He can easily make up a practical working list by which he can daily give a half hour, or an hour, of thought and time to others entirely outside the line of what can be considered his duties or obligations. A cheery visit to the sick, a social chat with some person too infirm to go out, a trifling service to some unfortunate, are things of genuine value out of all proportion to their apparent worth. It is not difficult to find the unfortunate, for they are everywhere. The hospitals are excellent fields for benevolent work, and especially the county hospitals. In the free wards of any hos-

pital there are always those suffering from the double affliction of sickness and poverty and the appearance of a sympathetic person as a visitor would be welcomed with delight.

The prisons are, of course, always a good field for benevolent work. If one finds it difficult to get into such work he can at least confer small favors. He can take some magazines or illustrated papers as gifts and say a few cheerful words. Then he can gradually get into sympathetic touch with some particular prisoner, study his case in a friendly way and find how he can be of real service to the unfortunate one.

Other avenues of helpfulness will open up to the person who turns his mind to the subject. If hospitals and prisons are not accessible then there are always the simpler things at hand. There are tired mothers who can be relieved of the care of children for a

few hours; there are anxious fathers out of work who may possibly be helped to find employment; there are overworked factory girls, slaving to earn a bare living, who would be delighted with some discarded clothing; there are children in the poorer districts who seldom or never get an outing.

Nothing is more necessary to the student of occultism than such sympathetic participation in human affairs and yet it is a thing that is sadly neglected. There is no greater mistake than the belief that such work is unimportant, and can be left to the Salvation Army or the Associated Charities, and no more fatal blunder than the notion that time cannot be taken from study in order to give trivial assistance to our less fortunate brothers. That is just what *can* be done with the greatest advantage to ourselves.

To set aside some part of one's time

for the deliberate cultivation of human sympathy, to make oneself a center for radiating the sunshine of life, to thus take thought of the welfare of others, and to become practically helpful to them, is to imitate, in some degree, the life and work of the great Masters of Compassion who are giving, not some, but all of their energies to practical work for the world with never a thought of themselves.

It is a very grave mistake to become so absorbed in one's business or studies as to be almost unconscious of the lives of others. Such a life is one-sided and unbalanced. To spend all one's time accumulating information is second only to the foolishness of giving an incarnation to the accumulation of money—and that would be nearly as foolish as to spend a winter accumulating snow. It is the folly of follies to devote time exclusively to study, to the neglect of practice. And yet there

are many who make that mistake. You may hear them say: "The Theosophical Society is not for material work. It is for the purpose of training students of occultism." And you may observe those who hold such views diligently studying the *Secret Doctrine,* and other profound works in occultism, for years—and doing little else! They acquire much occult information, which doubtless gives them the same sort of mental satisfaction that some people feel in accumulating money. But they make no use of the information for the world's helping. It is as though a would-be hero should spend a lifetime training to become the most valiant member of a life-saving crew and, in his anxiety to learn everything to be known about storms, lifeboats, signals and resuscitations, he should never find time to join his comrades in the actual work of rescuing shipwrecked people. Students of that

class naturally settle into the study rut and the real, living, theosophical movement sweeps past them and is lost. To be of any value to a person Theosophy must be *lived,* not merely intellectually comprehended, and it is in order to live it to the uttermost, to the very fullest, that the student should seek to blend precept and practice in an ideal life.

Becoming completely absorbed in business or in one's studies, while surrounded by all the opportunities presented by the physical plane life, is much like going to a good play and then reading a newspaper while the performance goes on unnoticed. The life we are now living gives admirable opportunities for balanced development, and it is just the things we do not naturally take to that may be most in need of attention. The person who has a strong tendency to give most of his time to amusements can clearly im-

prove matters by turning some attention to study; and no less certainly can the one who is wholly absorbed in study give some time to other things, to his great profit. The improvement of the intellect is important, but by no means *the* important thing in life. The cultivation of sympathy, of compassion, is tremendously more important to the student of occultism, and yet it is precisely the thing that we seldom think of as requiring systematic development. We have many methods and countless contrivances for developing the intellect but we leave the heart qualities to take care of themselves, and to grow in any vague and indefinite way that may come about.

It is quite as possible to cultivate compassion as to cultivate the intellect, but it requires to be done with attention and systematic effort. The necessity for it must first be recognized and the mind be turned resolutely to

the subject. This is the first step toward breaking up that self-centered absorption that makes us oblivious of the struggling brothers beside us on life's highway. Then one begins to observe more and more the difficulties and the life-problems of those about him. And as he looks and listens his sympathy grows strong.

Chapter IX.

THE CONDITIONS OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

One of the essentials in spiritual progress is the giving out of what is received. Without such giving there can be no real growth. There may be the accumulation of certain knowledge, but it will prove as worthless to its possessor, who relies upon that to carry him through, as gold would be to a man perishing alone in the desert, where all his life-long accumulations of money would avail him nothing—could not procure him a crust of bread nor a single drop of water. No, spiritual growth can never come of the accumulation of occult information—of probing into the secrets of nature and adding one fact to an-

other until the possessor feels that he is well versed in mystic lore. To grow spiritually means to live more vividly, to have a greater life capacity. To accumulate much knowledge and to make spiritual progress are two very different things. It is not facts we need so much as capacity to live, to love, to know the joy that we are now unable to comprehend. An infant a week old has five senses and is equipped with motor and sensory nerves; but it has not yet developed to that stage of its physical existence in which they are available for the enjoyment of a more abundant life than that it is living. Therefore it cannot live the wider, keener life of the healthy adult who finds manifold pleasures in physical existence. It cannot even comprehend that wider life. The difference is merely one of *capacity to live*. Still greater is the difference between the man who is spiritually undeveloped and

the one who has evolved the capacity to know the higher joys of the universe. One is a spiritual infant, with inherent but dormant faculties. The other is the spiritual adult, whose developed faculties give him a capacity to live and enjoy life in a way that is as little comprehended by the ordinary man of the world as the pleasures of literature, art and music are unknown to the infant in its cradle. The baby inhabits the same world as the adult and precisely the same sights and sounds are about him, but he has not as yet the capacity to appropriate them. In the very house he inhabits there may be libraries of choice literature, and art treasures of exquisite beauty, while some master musician thrills all who listen with divinest harmonies; but they simply have no existence for the infant because he has not the capacity for a life so full and rich. Ability to receive, to respond to that

which exists, is the measure of one's life.

To grow spiritually is to develop one's latent capacities, to enlarge the horizon of consciousness and to come into accord with the life-stream that pulses through the universe. It is not a process of accumulating information, or accumulating anything; but rather of getting rid of the impediments that obstruct the life-stream—that shut us out from the cosmic life-rhythm—that compel the universal life-tide to flow about us instead of through us.

To get spiritual knowledge and keep it, instead of being the method of spiritual growth, is one of the impediments that shuts out the life-current. A truth discovered should become a truth promulgated. Pass on the thought if you would receive more. Treasure no spiritual knowledge as a personal possession if you would not be cut off from the source of wisdom.

One grows most, spiritually, when the life-stream flows most through him to others. One who seeks to have and to hold is like a pond without an outlet, covered with its green slime of impurity. He represents spiritual stagnation. One who receives and gives again is like a lake from which springs a noble stream to quench the thirst of parching fields beyond. It is to the pond what sunshine is to shadow—what health is to disease. The pond is not without a certain phase of life. In its putrid waters swarm myriads of animalculæ and from its reeking surface arises the effluvia of fever. It is a noxious sort of life—the individual life turned inward upon itself. There can be no true life without outward activity. Life and activity are inseparable. The ocean is the antithesis of the stagnant pond. All that the ocean receives from the countless rivers it gives back to the skies. It is the

eternal rebuke of both selfishness and inaction. Its ceaseless tides and currents are the rhythmic pulse of health. From the land it receives, purifies and returns the gift. The miserly pond becomes stagnant in a week—the generous ocean never.

SPREADING THE LIGHT.

The stream must flow through the mind, not stop there, if spiritual growth is to begin and continue. Ways must be found of handing on the gift, of letting the light shine, of being an instrument for the illumination of others. No person can get something for nothing (although he may foolishly believe he can) or get help without helping. If he has already had some light it only signifies that he had a claim upon nature that has thus been paid. It may have been established without thought of what was occur-

ring, but it was due him and payment was inevitable and as natural as the rising of the sun or the coming of the summer. But the fact that some light and help have come does not prove that they will continue if they are received as a matter of course and thought of as a personal possession that concerns nobody else. To the universe every soul is important and one cannot be more important than another. Why, then, should anybody imagine that spiritual truth is for *him* rather than for the scores who can receive it through him?

There are some games that reverse the common rule of procedure and the winner is held to be he who can first get rid of all the points he holds. And so it is with things spiritual. Progress is by reversal of the common rule of procedure of the physical world. It is not by grasping but by giving that we get more,—that we finally win. Only

by the process of giving can the aspirant gain. He cannot get the full benefit of a spiritual truth until he has given it to others. The more he gives the richer he becomes. He cannot pass knowledge on to others without getting more wisdom from it himself. The effort to enlighten others increases his own illumination, and the more he gives the more he gets. His very forgetfulness of himself in the work of helping others gives the conditions that insure his rapid progress.

Of course one should never make himself a nuisance by talking Theosophy to anybody and everybody in season and out. Judgment and discrimination must guide him. There are people to whom Theosophy can be explained with as little profit as one can urge the beauties of the landscape upon his horse. The majority of people can no more receive Theosophy in the abstract and shape their lives by its pre-

cepts than a Fiji savage can see the necessity for railways and libraries. As the savage must evolve a long way before he even understands what civilization is, so most people must pass through much bitter experience before they begin to see the purpose of physical existence at all and to understand that there is such a thing as a life that is not centered in material things and material pursuits. But certain it is that in every community there are a few people who can receive Theosophy, as Theosophy, as a philosophy of life, as the science of the soul, while almost everybody can receive it indirectly; that is, accept something of its principles when they are not labeled "Theosophy," and when they are unaccompanied with any effort to induce them to accept a new and strange view of existence that suddenly upsets all their established ideas. There are always opportunities everywhere to

give some light to others, for all are struggling with their personal problems; and if we see that we cannot give one who is groping in the dark the light of the entire philosophy we can usually at least give him a suggestion that will help. Suppose, for example, that a friend has a grievance against somebody and blindly and foolishly determines to "get even," and nurses his wrath against a hoped-for day of vengeance. We can at least declare our belief in the folly of such a course and express admiration for the magnanimity that can ignore a personal affront. We can always talk tolerance where there is narrowness, justice where there is oppression and mercy where there is cruelty. Without dogmatically arguing our beliefs we can quietly let it be known that we are Theosophists, when it is appropriate to the occasion, and modestly but unhesitatingly champion the truth

as we see it when the opportunity occurs. Most important of all, we can constantly be in that helpful frame of mind that is always ready to give freely to others all the light that we have been given, for that is a step toward the goal of perfect illumination.

Chapter X.

CONQUERING DELUSIONS

As the young student of occultism gets fairly into his work he will find that his viewpoint is gradually changing and that old ideas are being replaced by newer and truer ones. Ultimately he will discover that he has been living in the midst of delusions and mistaking them for realities. One part of his work now is to conquer the delusions and come into a realization of the truth that is hidden by outward appearances. To acquire the ability to distinguish between the apparent and the real is a stupendous task, for only when human evolution is finished can such discrimination be perfect. But the searcher for occult truth can take a step that will start him on the way,

and that is the important thing now. To this end he may begin with an effort to master the illusion that the physical body is himself. We are so used to identifying the self with the body from our very infancy that to separate the two in thought even for a moment is at first nearly impossible, and yet it must be done. To fully realize that the body is as much an instrument of the self as the hand is, or as one's pen is, constitutes one of the first steps in occult progress. We have before us the work of freeing ourselves from delusions and this one that leads us to think of the body as the self is a starting point in the task. When it is accomplished we shall have made a most encouraging forward step that will lead to success in more difficult ones.

There are various ways in which we can gradually acquire the feeling that the body is not at all the self, but only

a thing we use for our convenience. One useful way is to keep in mind the fact that the body is a mere aggregation of matter that has no *permanent* relationship to the self; that this aggregation of physical matter is constantly changing; that it is always coming and going and is never the same for even a few days at a time. Some parts of it are replaced with new matter more slowly than others, but within a very few years (the seven years suggested by some physiologists is now said to be much too long for the facts) the entire body will be replaced by new matter. To put it differently, the physical body a person has to-day will, in a short time, have been returned to the elements of which it is composed, while matter that is now widely scattered over the earth will, by that time, be fashioned into the physical body he is yet to have. As a matter of scientific fact, from birth to death we have many

physical bodies but the process of their coming and going is so gradual and imperceptible that we do not realize it. Nevertheless the quantity of matter that a man uses as a body, in the course of a long life—the matter which the average man regards as himself—will amount to more than a ton. A very little thought will show anybody the folly of identifying that ton of matter as himself! It is only a quantity of matter brought together to build a working instrument for the self, as the matter in the pen has been fashioned into a different instrument for the use of the self; only, in the case of the body the matter has not all been used at one time. If the student will remember that the self, with all its memories, is unaffected by this constant change in the physical body; that it really has no permanent relationship whatever to the body, which, to the eye of science is but a whirling, shifting

mass of matter, the delusion that he is the body will begin to lose its power over his mind. Think continually of the body as merely a changing aggregation of atoms, forming, reforming, disappearing, while the self is permanent, enduring and independent, temporarily using the physical body but ready when the time comes to step entirely aside from it, to use it no longer, to return to it no more.

It is not easy to think of the self as separated from the familiar form we know and here the student of Theosophy will be helped by the fact that the astral body is a duplicate of the physical form. Remembering that the astral is a degree nearer reality than the physical region he can think of the astral body as representing the self and thus, in thought, separate himself from the physical body and picture the self with all its attributes and powers being expressed in the higher vehicles, wholly

independent of the mass of matter called the physical body. Of course he cannot stop there. It is but a beginning. The time will come when he must separate the self from the astral body also, and from the mental body as well. The thing he may really do with good results is to go as far up as the causal body in his thought of separating the self from its vehicles. He should always think of these invisible vehicles, or bodies, as being composed of matter that freely interpenetrates the physical body as water saturates a sponge. He should keep it always in mind that man is a wonderfully complex being and that the various bodies he inhabits are but sections of the complex whole, each playing a distinct part in the total of the life functions. Perhaps it may help him to remember the complexity of the physical body, considered by itself. It, alone, is composed of various grades

of matter, each of them being a section of the physical body and giving us an outline of it. There is, first, the dense matter of the bones. They are the frame-work for the rest and give us the body in outline, but the skeleton is not the body. Then there is a different grade of matter which we call flesh. It also represents the form of the body but it is far from being the whole body. Then we have the nerves. If a diagram of the nervous system were made, with each nerve in its proper place, we should have again a perfect outline of the human form. But these nerves are not the body,—only a section of it performing a distinct office. Then there is also the fluid which we call the blood. If it could be suddenly stopped in its circulation, instantly frozen, and all of the particles in the capillaries were to remain where they were at the instant that circulation was suspended while

all the rest of the matter of the body should, by some magic, vanish, we would still have the human form perfectly outlined by the blood that circulates in it. Yet because the blood outlines the human form it is not the body. It is only another section of the complex whole known as the physical body. It requires all these sections, and requires them all interlaced and performing different functions, to constitute the physical body.

Now, it is no more erroneous to think of any one of these different sections of the body, each with its specific work to do, as being the physical body than to think of any one of the bodies of man as being the man. Just as all these grades of physical matter, each carrying forward its particular set of activities from birth to death, are required to make up the physical body, to constitute the mechanism through which the man func-

tions on the physical plane, so are the different bodies through which we function in the various planes required to express the whole range of the ego's activities in the three worlds in which we simultaneously exist. The physical, the astral, the lower mental and the causal bodies, should be thought of as four separable parts or sections of one complex whole, but not as the man himself; the ego, the self, being the individualized portion of the universal consciousness functioning through them all.

Another way in which one can achieve some degree of success in freeing oneself from delusions is to remember that the physical senses are very unreliable interpreters of facts and that in the simplest of things they mislead us. The physical senses tell us that the earth is stationary and that the sun, as well as the moon, moves about it. We have to fall back upon our reason,

make mechanical measurements and careful comparisons of various facts, before we can free ourselves from this particular deception of the physical senses; and many people never do get free from it. If we look at a straight log that lies on the bank of a stream with one end submerged in the clear water, the eye reports to us that the log is bent at the point where it enters the water. If two trains are standing side by side and we are on one while the other begins to move slowly the eye falsely reports to the consciousness that our own train is moving. If we cross the first and second fingers of the hand and then roll a marble back and forth across the finger tips the sense of touch falsely informs us that there are two marbles instead of one. Many facts and experiences may be cited to show the utter unreliability of the testimony of the physical senses. The student should keep it steadily in mind that

just as we are thus misled by the physical senses in these matters so are we deceived by them in other and more important affairs; and just as one may hold the mental picture of the earth being spherical and moving about the sun until the idea of it being flat and stationary becomes unnatural and absurd so can he think the truth about the interpenetrating relationship of the various bodies in which he functions until the old delusions disappear and trouble him no longer. The physical body becomes to him in reality an instrument that he is using, a vehicle in which he is moving about and through which he communicates with others in his daily activities. Slowly but surely this fact becomes established in his consciousness, and he has taken an important step in discrimination between the real and the unreal.

Chapter XI.

FAULTS TO BE GUARDED AGAINST

When a person who comes into the study of Theosophy begins to see its power and beauty in re-shaping the lives of those who endeavor to practice its precepts, it is not strange that he should become enthusiastic in his efforts to interest others in it, or that he should develop a strong feeling of partisanship for it.

But in this direction lies a subtle danger—the danger of becoming dogmatic and thus stifling spiritual growth. Whoever falls into that error has put an end to his own progress. It is true that Theosophy is a study of life so comprehensive in its sublime reach

that it includes all religions; but this very fact should teach the student tolerance, rather than give him a feeling that Theosophy is the only thing needed for the salvation of the world. It should not be forgotten that until a person has reached a certain point in human evolution Theosophy can do nothing for him—cannot even arrest his attention—and that he reaches that particular point in his development through some of the religious or philosophical movements from which he finally graduates into Theosophy. Therefore the organized moral and intellectual movements of various kinds that fill the world bear somewhat the relationship to Theosophy that private and public schools of all descriptions bear to the university. For a student of occultism to assume the attitude which indicates a belief that Theosophy is a thing to supplant all religious denominations—that it is the one and

only thing required by humanity—would be much like insisting that all common schools be raised tomorrow to the university level. One of the really beautiful things about Theosophy is its breadth and tolerance; and it is only when its devotees shape their course by that spirit of tolerance that progress is possible for them. Theosophy is not a thing that requires partisanship. It wins its way by its inherent reasonableness, not by the vehemence with which it is urged.

The disposition to too strongly argue the benefits of Theosophy is an error to be avoided. We have only to observe one orthodox religionist arguing the superiority of his denomination to all others to know how ineffective it is with his opponent, who is equally sure of the superiority of *his* faith. Neither of them is learning anything. Each is only wondering why the other insists upon using more than his share

of the time! Now, the student of occultism should never permit himself to drop into that antagonistic mental condition. *It is an attitude that closes the mind to truth.* The reverse of that mental condition should be characteristic of the occult student. He should always be receptive to truth. He should, indeed, be always eagerly alert for a new idea, for a new point of view from which to look at any particular fact. He should not be as one who has a certain doctrine to defend and is always suspicious of any new fact or idea, his first feeling being a fear that it may endanger his belief. One's first thought should not be "Does this new idea support my theory" but "Is it true?" It is only by such an attitude of mind that truth can be recognized when it is encountered and the student of occultism is, above all things, a truth seeker. He has nothing to fear about any possible

antagonism between his belief and the facts. He knows that if there is any apparent disagreement there is something wrong either with his conception of theosophical principles or his understanding of the facts; and he sets to work to think out the solution and adjust himself to the truth. Thus shall he constantly grow in wisdom and understanding.

But there is another fault to be guarded against even more carefully than the inclination toward militant and dogmatic defense of one's beliefs, and it presents greater difficulties because it lies more deeply rooted within the personality. This is the disposition to resent personal criticism and to defend oneself with such vigor that little or no consideration is given to the criticism. It is the most common, as well as the most personally injurious, course that people take. It is, once more, the mental attitude that closes

the mind to truth, and to the very truth that is perhaps most needed. There is an occult maxim that "every contact is an opportunity." It is also true that every contact with another furnishes us a teacher, but that we usually foolishly reject the teaching when it touches our vanity or pride. The true student of occultism is as willing to learn from babes as from sages. He tries to keep an open mind, always at attention, always receptive to truth regardless of the source and regardless of how it may affect him personally. He should not only welcome criticism but should regard the critic as his friend and teacher. If he is wise he will extract a valuable lesson from the criticism. He will think it calmly over and try to get his critic's point of view. If he can see that there was good ground for the criticism he will set to work at once to eliminate the fault on which it was based. If he

cannot find cause for the criticism, and reaches the conclusion that it was unjust, he will understand that his own false judgments of others are reacting upon him and will try henceforth to be more careful and considerate.

Undue partisanship of our beliefs shuts out the truth, and dogmatism bars the way to our further progress. Foolish sensitiveness about personal criticism likewise closes the mind to truth and leaves us firmly clinging to the very faults that prevent our spiritual development.

Chapter XII.

THE WRONG ROAD AND THE RIGHT ONE

Old sayings often contain great wisdom. That is why they are old. If they were not the vehicles of wisdom they would have died young. They survive through the centuries because they are successful teachers. Their age is equal to their utility. One of these old maxims should have the respectful consideration of students of occultism. This ancient saying runs like this: "The longest way around is the shortest way home." It is a sage warning against injudicious haste. It is a concise statement of the fact that human experience has demonstrated that it is unwise to take "short cuts" to a given destination instead of fol-

lowing the well established road; and that the desire to save time is liable in the end to lead not only to the loss of time but to invite disaster, also.

Now, there is probably no field of activity where this is so true as it is in the study of occultism. The student is likely to be strongly attracted towards psychic development and to find himself ardently desiring to possess the power of clairvoyance, and this desire may tempt him to abandon the longer but safer way. It is well to desire the opening of the inner faculties in order that one may become more efficient and useful in the great work of uplifting the race; but it is a sad misfortune to make it an end in itself and thus lose sight of more important things in the effort to attain it. Such a desire may tempt the unwary into the by-way of artificial development—and the slough of despond and disaster that lies at the farther end of

it. Be content with the upward path, though the hills are rugged and the climbing is slow and difficult. It is the shortest way home.

As a matter of simple fact there are more important things than clairvoyance to be developed by the student of occultism—things tremendously more important. Without them clairvoyance is but a dangerous instrument to possess; with them, the inner faculties will open as a matter of course,—will open as a flower unfolds before the rising sun.

The psyhcism that dazzles many people and appears so wonderful and desirable—the faculty that enables the psychic to describe another's characteristics, to trace a little of his past and to foretell a few future events—is of extremely small and uncertain value. It is rarely, if ever, under control and direction of the psychic and is no more like the higher clairvoyance used in oc-

cult investigation than a flaw in a window-pane that happens to magnify the stars seen through it, is like the astronomer's telescope that sweeps the heavens with scientific accuracy. Such minor psychic faculty does not imply spirituality any more than the ability to hypnotize implies it, and may be possessed by the good or the bad just as intellect is. Perhaps its chief merit lies in the fact that it has served to arouse many people to an interest in occultism and has impelled them to an investigation that has led them away from materialism.

Even if the occult student, at the peril of his health and at the risk of generating unfortunate karma that may retard his higher development for several incarnations, acquires this lower psychic faculty it will avail him little in added ability to gain knowledge. Lacking the training necessary for accurate observation and interpre-

tation he is as helpless, for all practical purposes, as an uneducated man would be in possession of a chemist's laboratory. He would have reached such minor psychic development only after giving it much time and attention that could have been turned to far better account in another direction where it would have resulted in permanent gain of the greatest value to him. The value of the slight psychic ability that is exhibited by the fortune-telling variety of clairvoyant, and that is chiefly used for commercial purposes, is very greatly exaggerated. Because a few things are accurately given us we get the erroneous impression that our whole future lies open to the psychic and that he could, with perfect ease, forecast any part of it. At the same time we pay but little attention to the things about which he is altogether in error, so strongly are we impressed with that which is correct. The actual

value of this degree of clairvoyance, or of mediumship, as the case may be, is but little, if any above that of palmistry. The skillful palmist, without possessing a trace of clairvoyance, can read from the open hand nearly as much of the life record of the past, and the life plan of the future, as can a person possessed of this minor psychic development, and with less liability of error. Of course the psychic gets a somewhat different class of facts, a little more of detail, perhaps, than the skilled palmist, yet nothing more remarkable and certainly not of greater accuracy or value than the capable palmist is able to give.

With nothing of real value to gain, but with the possibility of losing much in the effort to acquire that uncertain and impermanent little, it is clearly enough a foolish thing to give time and energy to such development. Many persons have tried this supposed

"shorter way" to their sorrow, and by a certain kind of peculiar breathing exercise, or other method, have succeeded in gaining astral sight and also in wrecking the nervous system and destroying health and happiness for the remainder of this life. Sometimes it happens that by such artificial development astral sight is gained on the lower levels of the astral region, only for the experimenter to find to his horror that he cannot then control it and must, against his will, remain conscious of unpleasant things. He finds, when it is too late, that he has made haste unwisely and has done worse than merely waste time. He has not only failed to find what is truly the shortest way home but he may easily entangle himself in difficulties that may prove a handicap on the right road when he finally comes to a realization of his error and resolves to set out properly on the forward journey.

But what is this longer way around that is really the shortest way home? It is the development of the spiritual nature, and it is only apparently the longer way on account of the delusion regarding the supposed shorter one. This method instead of dealing with psychism gives its attention entirely to spirituality; and instead of regarding the present life as the field of operations its outlook is from the viewpoint of the ego's general and continuous welfare, and necessarily extends over many lives. In other words it takes into consideration the whole of the journey instead of a little fragment of it and refuses to sacrifice the welfare of the future to the whim of the present. And just here is one of the points that the student should keep always in mind,—the necessity of thinking of more than one incarnation at a time, for if he did only that his plans for his development would thus be greatly

limited and narrowed. He should try to free himself from the idea that death is in any way the end of the program and endeavor to accustom himself to the thought that it is merely an incident, a change, as finishing a given task or retiring for an afternoon nap is a change in the day's routine. He should keep it steadily in mind that there is no death; that there are only various states of consciousness and that one who is following out a consistent plan of evolutionary development may carry it along from life to life, thus moving forward with constantly accelerating speed. He should think of, and plan for, the far away future,—never alone for the few years that may perhaps remain of the present incarnation.

With a view then to permanent, instead of temporary results, let the attention be turned to the work of spiritual development, to the elimination of one's undesirable characteristics, to

the purification of the lower nature, to the task of bringing the whole of the activities of the waking consciousness into harmony with the loftiest ideals one can conceive. This is the apparently longer way around which is really the short and sure way home. On this road we may travel as rapidly as we choose. The rapidity of our progress will depend entirely upon the earnestness and the energy put into the work and when the right time comes, or, speaking more accurately, when the right inner condition is attained, astral sight will come as a natural result and be a blessing instead of a curse.

One thing that the aspirant for spiritual development should never forget is that he does not work alone. He probably will, for a considerable time, be unconscious of the fact that any other being in the universe has the slightest interest in his efforts. And this is well; for one of the lessons he

is learning is to stand alone and persevere. But the fact is that every aspiration is known and every effort is observed. Just as much help is given as the aspirant is able to receive, and long before he knows it in his waking consciousness the earnest student is, during the hours of sleep, receiving instruction on the inner planes. Without such help spiritual progress would be practically impossible; and an extremely important thing to remember is that we can get help only as we deserve it. Now, we deserve it in proportion that we give it; and this is why it is that to "forget oneself in the service of others" is a wiser course than to give time and energy to developing psychic faculties for our own satisfaction that are of no real value to anybody. Some of us have heard it said by others farther along on the road that "it is precisely when we are thinking least about ourselves that we

are making the greatest progress." Try hard to be useful, to deserve much, rather than to secure entertaining faculties for the personal satisfaction it may give.

While the development of clairvoyance is so attractive to many we seldom hear questions asked about how to develop intuition,—a matter of very much greater importance. Developing the intuition is a process of illuminating the lower personality with the light of the higher self and it comes about by pure living and lofty thinking. Intuition is from a high level of the inner worlds—from the source of wisdom—and it is the ability of rising to such spiritual heights, of bringing into the physical consciousness such unerring insight, that the student of occultism should strive for instead of for the development of psychic faculties. When the art of thus controlling and purifying thought and desire is attained the

awakening of the spiritual powers will follow. "All things come to him who waits"—and works.

Chapter XIII.

TOLERANCE

The cultivation of a broad tolerance is necessary for one who would make any intellectual and moral progress. Intolerance fetters the soul. It erects barriers between us and others and clouds the vision instead of illuminating the understanding. It limits our opportunities and narrows our field of experience. Now, experience is the great teacher—the master instructor in the evolutionary school. It is through experience that we evolve, that we reach the higher stages of development. The difference between the ignorant, uncouth and depraved, and the enlightened, refined and noble, is the result of thought and emotion working on the experiences that arouse them.

Thought and experience, acting and reacting on each other, are the great character builders. At a lower stage of evolution the experience arouses thought and we get a lesson we did not seek by making mental deductions from the experience, as for example, when one has thoughtlessly gone out on a cold day without adequate clothing and suffered in consequence, and, reflecting upon it afterward, learns at least a little in the development of caution. At a higher stage of evolution thought takes precedence and we deliberately search out that within us which needs strengthening and as deliberately seek the experience required to develop the desired virtue, as when, after deciding that we are deficient in compassion we set about cultivating it by visiting the sick and the bereaved. But whether experience comes first or last it is an indispensable factor in human progress and soul development, and whatever re-

stricts our experience delays our evolution.

While religious intolerance is a very pronounced form of this vice—a term none too strong for a thing so detrimental to human welfare—we should not forget that, in one form or another, there is more intolerance in the average person and, indeed, even in the fairly liberal and progressive man, than most of us would be willing to admit. In many directions this deadly moral nightshade extends its branches. There is race intolerance, national intolerance, class intolerance and, insidious and far-reaching in its evil effects, the more common form of intolerance which we know as self-righteousness, that leads a person to place false emphasis on the weaknesses of others and remain blind to his own. Many people have passed the point where they have any prejudice against a person because he is of another race and color; have reached

the degree of enlightenment that enables them to look upon a man of another nationality as they regard a fellow countryman; have learned to feel no prejudice against another because he is of a different class or of a higher or lower walk of life, as the case may be; have reached the degree of understanding that enables them, no matter what their own station is, to see all people as one; to look with an impartial eye upon the richest and the poorest, the learned and the ignorant, as different members of the universal family, each entitled to the most courteous consideration;—many people are able to do all this, and yet when it comes to dealing with various grades of moral weaknesses they exhibit a self-righteous intolerance that is a bar to spiritual progress. There are certain forms, or classes, of moral weaknesses with which they will have nothing to do and toward their unfortunate broth-

ers and sisters afflicted with these moral flaws they assume an attitude of lofty disdain. Many a man who is broad-minded and progressive regards a thief or a degenerate as being beyond the pale of consideration, while many a liberal and sympathetic woman regards her fallen sister with equal intolerance and draws her skirts aside, as she passes, with frank contempt. And so it is that thousands of us who are swift to condemn the intolerance of religious bigotry are still blind to the fact that we are, ourselves, equally intolerant when it comes to matters of a different sort.

Now, it is when we have conquered intolerance in its commoner forms and are ready for the higher work of overcoming the subtler variety, that great spiritual lessons can come to us through the very people against whom, through our intolerance, we are closing the gates of our sympathy. If we do not erect

the barrier of intolerance and thus completely separate ourselves from them—if we do not thus limit our field of experience by our foolish prejudice—we shall find that from the sympathetic consideration we give them will spring a wider wisdom than we now possess. The great work that lies before every evolving soul is nothing less than the comprehension of life in all its forms and varieties, the understanding of the universe and the acquirement of compassion; and every barrier that stands in the way of that must be broken down. To permit any lingering intolerance to narrow and blind us in our spiritual unfoldment would be something like the blunder of a man who desires to be a great painter harboring such a prejudice against a certain color that he would have nothing to do with it. He would thus be shutting out a factor in his artistic development that would be absolutely fatal to his

ultimate success and all his work would be marred and his progress in art would be barred by that foolish prejudice until he got rid of it. Red may not be as pleasing a color as blue, but both are equally the result of the division of a pure white ray of light by a prism and each is essential to the harmony of colors. Even so is every human personality the result of trying to manifest inherent divinity through the medium of matter and its differing expressions must be studied and understood before we can comprehend the harmony of the whole.

Between intolerance and self-righteousness there is a most intimate relationship and the highest of spiritual authorities has pointed out the subtle evil that lurks therein. Perhaps many good people will never cease wondering about the utterances of the Christ as He rebuked the Pharisees and mingled with the publicans and sinners, declar-

ing the latter to be much nearer the kingdom of heaven than the self-righteous. But to the student of occultism this truth must be as clear as the sunlight. A feeling of separateness is the sin of sins and the most difficult to overcome. The sinners from whom the self-righteous drew back in horror doubtless had the heart side of their natures much more highly evolved than their haughty critics had, and although they were at the moment showing forth a moral weakness to be condemned, they would, in the natural course of things, evolve out of that much more quickly than those who looked upon them with intolerant contempt would be able to get rid of *that* flaw. To put the case differently it was just because this particular class of sinners represented a lower form of iniquity than self-righteousness that the public was able to recognize it as a sin, and it was precisely because self-righteousness was

a more subtle (and therefore more dangerous) form of iniquity that the people did not recognize it as a sin at all.

Why is intolerance such a dangerous thing? For one reason because by placing undue emphasis on the fault against which the line of exclusion is drawn without mercy or consideration, we become blind to the good qualities of which no human being is destitute, and thus ignore the very thing for which we should always be searching and which we should emphasize and encourage. We permit the one bad quality to hypnotize us, so to speak, by steadily regarding it until our moral judgment is unbalanced, as a man gazes at a black spot on a white wall until certain muscles are fatigued, and hypnosis is induced. Even so do the intolerant paralyze perception and become blind to the good.

The remedy for intolerance is to re-

member that all life is one; that those about us are literally ourselves in other forms and that at a high point on the inner planes consciousness is a unit. We are individuals and yet we are one, as the fingers are separate and yet one in consciousness, so that one of them cannot suffer without affecting the one consciousness that directs all. The body is no more the self than one finger is the hand. The universal Self is being expressed through many forms, each of which expresses but a fragment of the one consciousness, and if one of these apparently separate selves regards another with self-righteous intolerance a subtle injury is done which is somewhat analogous to the wound one hand might inflict upon the other.

A helpful method in eliminating intolerance, in breaking down the separating walls, is to deliberately search for the good in everything and every-

body; to remember that there is *nobody* who does not embody some virtue. The good and the bad, or strength and weakness, are mingled in all. The distinction is that the weaknesses differ in the manner of their expression. Some weaknesses are more unpopular than others, that's all; and that is what determines the moral code. One robs a stranger but would defend his friends with his life. Another breaks no law, but would sneak away at the first sign of danger to himself and leave his friends to perish. One gives way to the lust of drunkenness, but is always the friend of other people. Another is a model of sobriety but will meanly spread the gossip of his friend's shame. One is quick in temper and engages in a street brawl, but a moment later shakes hands with his antagonist. Another would do nothing so disgraceful, but when offended bullies and insults the timid in a way that satisfies his

anger and proves his cowardice. And so it goes throughout the whole list of human weaknesses. Some classes of faults are more unpopular than others largely because they are more on the surface; and, as a rule, those who are most intolerant of the frailties of others are precisely those who, in other directions, are morally lame themselves. But there is good in all; even in the intolerant!

Tolerance is a noble virtue, and a cornerstone in the temple not built with hands. Upon it must rest other virtues to be acquired. Tolerance precedes enlightenment as the dawn precedes the day. It dispels the darkness of our ignorance about others and illuminates the road that leads to peace. It is the gateway to universal brotherhood. Without tolerance there can be no justice. With tolerance there can be no cruelty. It is the herald of mercy and the prophecy of dawning compassion.

Chapter XIV.

PURITY

Purity is a word that signifies much in occultism. We encounter it often, for there can be no spiritual progress that does not reckon with it. A striving after purity is one of the absolute essentials to higher development. There can be no real spiritual illumination without it, no matter what other qualifications may be possessed.

The essential difference between a spiritual person and the man of the world is that the latter lives largely in his physical senses. At a low point in evolution—the savage state—he lives altogether in the physical senses. He is completely dominated by physical desires, passions and emotions. It is the triumph of matter. As evolution goes

forward, as experience is multiplied by successive incarnations, the mentality asserts itself and finally becomes the center in which he lives, mental pleasures gradually outweighing the physical. Ultimately spiritual joys will rise triumphant over both; but for a long period the man is slowly rising from one stage to the other, with the new and higher dawning in him while the old and lower still hold him firmly. When he comes into a realization of the fact that he can work intelligently with nature in hastening his own evolution, and turns his attention to a definite method of doing it, he enters into a contest with his lower nature, the duration of which is dependent upon his earnestness no less than upon his will power.

At the point where the aspirant for higher things awakes to the fact that the old life of sensation is an undesirable slavery, realizes dimly that some-

thing better lies above and beyond it, and resolves to attain it, he is likely to be surprised at the strength of the old fetters which hold him back. There are certain appetites that he would gladly be rid of but they assert themselves at intervals with astonishing vigor. There are passions he thought dead which he finds were only sleeping. There are impulses he believed were under control but they flash out without the slightest warning and throw him off his balance. There are certain classes of undesirable thoughts that he hoped to have done with forever but they leap into his mind in spite of him.

Why is it that with the perfectly pure motive of rising above the lower nature, with the sincere desire for a loftier life, and with an earnest effort to achieve it, we do not promptly succeed? When we intellectually comprehend that the change is necessary to

our happiness, and most devoutly desire its consummation, why is a prolonged struggle necessary to accomplish it? Because the difficulty is not in ourselves at all but in the bodies we live in. The self has resolved upon the higher life. The ego has succeeded in impressing the waking consciousness —in arousing a longing to escape from the thraldom of the lower nature. But the bodies are to be reckoned with and they cannot be changed in a day. They are the seat of what is commonly called "sin,"—the fortress of the lower nature; and that fortress cannot be carried by assault. It can be taken only by siege.

The progress of purification is a process of changing the matter that composes the physical body and its invisible counterparts, as actually and literally as one would reconstruct a house, making it into a totally different habitation. The very desire to attain the

higher life begins the reconstruction. But just as one could not instantly raze his house and as instantly rebuild it, but could effect any desired change by taking the necessary time, so any change that we are capable of imagining can be made in ourselves within a reasonable period. We cannot unbuild in a few days what we have been so long in building. Our battle is against the automatism that we have created. The matter of the astral body has long been accustomed to act in a certain way under certain circumstances and it continues to do it, for a time, in spite of all our genuine desires to the contrary. If a man has long given way to great anger on slight provocation, and resolves to do so no more, his good resolution will help a little toward his some-time self-mastery; but when the good resolution is followed by sudden and unexpected provocation the astral body responds before he is aware what

is happening. So, too, with the mental body. However much he may desire to be pure in mind an impure thought that has often been harbored in the past will flash in when some connecting thought or old association opens up the way. Of course the astral and mental bodies work together, desire and thought being inextricably mingled and interwoven, and the purification of both goes forward together.

While the purification of the lower nature is not an instantaneous process and is likely to be attended with some temporary failures in the efforts to live up to one's ideal, the final triumph is certain if there is reasonable persistence and earnestness, together with some knowledge of how to proceed. There should be no feeling of an effort to escape from something undesirable and degrading. The mind should not be turned in that direction at all. It should be kept busy in the

opposite direction—should be occupied with pure and lofty thinking. There should be no mental effort to crush out the old order of things. Let it be *crowded out* by thoughts of the opposite nature. To set the mind determinedly against a certain objectionable thing is only to give that thing new vitality and invite it to battle. Non-resistance has its value here as elsewhere. "Let sleeping dogs lie."

Another helpful thing to remember is that association and environment are important factors. Suppose a man is trying to overcome a certain thing—the desire for liquor or tobacco, or meat; and what is true of these will apply to all other desires of the lower nature. He may escape them for a time and almost believe that they are dead when some old association will arouse them again. Environment is a thing to be taken into account. Until one has grown strong enough to touch

elbows with old temptations and remain absolutely unmoved it is wise to keep as far from them as possible. A man who is fighting the drink habit need not increase his difficulties by living next door to a bar. One who is trying to purify the mind can keep away from certain classes of much advertised plays in which the public desire for the salacious is gratified under the mask of dramatic art of a high order. It is remarkable what vitality the desires of the lower nature have, how tenaciously they cling and how subtly they masquerade in attractive disguises. Art is invoked to refine them and wit is used to adorn them and keep them alive in clever song and apt story.

Every person has his varying moods. There are times when we feel spiritually very strong and easily dominate the lower nature. But there are other times when materiality rises against

us in its might and we feel the very near danger of losing our balance and being swept from our footing in the tide of reaction. In such moments of peril a definite course of action is useful. The Christian prays, which draws his mind away from lower things to the higher. The occultist can think steadily of the Masters of Compassion, even of the Christ, all of whom he regards as embodying all that is pure and exalted. He can remind himself of the too-often forgotten fact that his efforts are known and observed and that he does not strive after purity unaided.

To succeed well in dominating the lower nature the danger of permitting the mind to turn for even a moment to impure thoughts and things should be well understood. Any sort of dallying is fatal and safety lies only in turning the mind *instantly* in the other direction when the old thoughts and im-

pulses crowd upon us. This is repeatedly emphasized in such invaluable occult works as *The Voice of the Silence.*

"Strive with thy thoughts unclean before they overpower thee. * * * Beware, disciple, suffer not e'en though it be their shadow to approach."

And again:

"One single thought about the past that thou hast left behind will drag thee down, and thou wilt have to start the climb anew."

To be pure is to be strong. Purity and spiritual strength are inseparable. There can be no real strength without purity; not even mental strength. In proportion that the lower nature dominates a man's life he is both physically and mentally weak, as well as morally weak. The physical, mental and moral are so inextricably interwoven that each necessarily reacts upon the others. None of them can stand alone because they are really a blended whole, gain-

ing or losing together. There must be purity and strength for all or for none. Purity, then, is literally the way to strength, to power, to illumination and to immortality.

Chapter XV.

TRUTHFULNESS

Truthfulness, like purity, is one of the absolute essentials to occult progress. Whoever would know the truth must be truthful. We cannot comprehend reality until we are, ourselves, sound and true and genuine to the heart's center.

The average man of the world little realizes the extent of his falsity. He thinks falsely, acts falsely and speaks falsely, with little thought that he is doing anything wrong. He habitually represents himself to be different from what he really is. He always tries to give the impression that he is better than he knows himself to be. His life among others is a perpetual masquerade. To prevent others knowing the

truth about him he cheerfully lies whenever he thinks it necessary as a part of the program of concealment. He acts as well as talks in a way calculated to mislead people, and bring them to erroneous conclusions about him and his affairs. It never occurs to him that he should, under any circumstances, admit that he has been in the wrong or even that he has made an error of judgment. If his quarrel with another has become known he takes great pains to show that it was entirely the fault of his enemy. If he has circulated a story detrimental to another, and later finds it to be untrue, instead of setting it right, as far as he can, he too often thinks only of justifying his criticism by trying to find some other damaging facts about his victim to help show the probability, at least, of his first statement being reasonable! In any event he will not permit anybody to think that *he* is in

any way to blame for any trouble that exists, and whenever he is connected with any controversy or difficulty with others he insists upon ignoring that axiom of nature that there are always two sides to every question. He fully believes that in thus getting credit for being a better man than he actually is—a person without fault or frailty—he is promoting his own welfare; and if somebody should suggest to him that his truest self-interest could be better served by being perfectly candid and truthful even about himself, he would probably think it very foolish advice. Just like the man, with a different kind of moral weakness, who steals another's money, he feels certain that he is "getting the best of it," and that the saying "honesty is the best policy" is only a maxim for fools instead of a literal fact in nature. It has never occurred to him that in deceiving others he is bandaging his own eyes, blunting

his own perceptions, dulling his own intuition, and that in masking himself he is placing a mask over those very truths of nature which are a necessity to his higher development. It is true that he may lead others to believe him a better man than he is and that for a little span he may strut in his disguise of false-righteousness; but he pays a fool's price for the vain folly and the law of adjustment, whether in this incarnation or another, will finally bring him the bitter humiliation necessary to arouse him from his false attitude toward life. His account of vanity and humility will finally balance and cancel itself and he will awake to the fact that his foolish untruthfulness has cost him dearly—that it has retarded his progress in a way that is worse than merely to have remained ignorant of nature's choicest wisdom, though that in itself is misfortune enough.

One of the things that first impresses those fortunate enough to come into touch with teachers of occultism who are direct pupils of the Masters of Wisdom is their painstaking precautions to prevent anybody getting from them a wrong idea about the facts as they are. Thus intense is the feeling of responsibility on the part of those who know the occult results of the slightest misleading of others. The informed occultist instead of ever trying to make himself appear before the world better than he is, in any trouble with which he might be connected, does not beyond merely declaring the fact of his innocence attempt to defend himself *even when entirely blameless.* He knows perfectly well that what people think him to be just now is of extremely small importance, while what he really is is of transcendent consequence. He will set right any erroneous impression if he can without augmenting the

trouble, but not for the good opinion and the applause of the whole world would he say or do anything that would be the slightest misrepresentation of the truth. The more one knows about occultism the more scrupulously accurate he must necessarily become in the minutest degree about the most trivial things, for he has learned that only as he lives truth shall he know it.

Somebody has invented the convenient and comforting phrase, "a white lie." But occultism knows no white lies. It is quite color blind on the subject of falsehood. The essence of untruthfulness is deception and deception is unjustifiable. The manner of accomplishing the deception is wholly immaterial. It may be only by a smile or a facial expression of surprise, but if it misleads it is no less a lie than if plainly put in words. Of course there are impertinent persons who take the liberty of interrogating people about

things which are none of their business, but the victim of their inquisitiveness is under no obligation to satisfy their curiosity; still less to take upon himself the misfortune of mis-statement in order to prevent them learning facts they have no right to know. There are times when absolute silence is commendable, when one is justified in disregarding a direct question and declining to utter a word on the subject.

Putting aside the more obvious forms of falsification, that scarcely require comment, there remains that which is the more dangerous just because it is less pronounced and is veiled under the conventionalities of polite usage. How easy it is to indulge the pernicious habit of flattering another and saying falsely pleasant things about him in order to be agreeable and to make him friendly! We praise his song or his essay extravagantly when we know well enough that it was only

ordinarily good; and in doing that we cultivate his vanity, if he has that very common weakness, and lead him to place a false valuation upon his accomplishments and perhaps to foolishly attempt something for which he is not competent. We often excuse our inclination to flatter with the thought that it is well to stimulate others. The truth is that it would be much kinder to gently criticise our friend's work and help him to appear to better advantage in the future instead of to worse. The truth cannot do him harm if it is tempered with real sympathy and we are prompted by a genuine desire to help instead of to please.

Our daily social life, also, is full of false standards and is narrowed and bemeaned with petty deceptions; and of course it is as useless as it is false and hollow. Nothing can be worth while that does not in some way promote the welfare of people or living things.

The person who would find a satisfactory life must have his every thought and act ring true to the genuine in human nature. He must acquire again the candor and truthfulness of childhood and cultivate his sympathy to the point that prevents such candor being harsh and brutal. He must continually guard his thoughts, his speech and his acts to see that no shadow of untruthfulness is in any of them. Only he who can live a perfectly open, candid life with no motive disguised, no action cloaked and no thought concealed, may hope to reach the very heart of nature's wisdom and comprehend it.

Chapter XVI.

FEARLESSNESS

Fearlessness is something more than courage. A man whom we call courageous may be very far from fearless. A recruit going onto the battle-field for the first time, white-faced but determined, is called a man of courage. Wellington is said to have remarked as a young soldier passed him to the front, pale, trembling but resolute: "There goes a brave man; he realizes the danger, but unhesitatingly faces it." A man may have the courage to move toward a known danger, even to risk his life where there is a strong probability of losing it, and yet be by no means fearless. Perfect freedom from fear marks a high state of development and indicates great knowledge;

for, as a matter of fact, fear arises from ignorance.

Chiefly because ignorance is the parent of fear, a man who is courageous in one thing is sometimes an abject coward in another. He may face death a hundred times and come to be quite unconcerned about bullets and shells, and yet he could not be induced to spend a night alone in a graveyard. A French king who died upon the scaffold with such calm courage and dignity as to arouse general admiration had been so lacking in a different kind of firmness as to hasten his own downfall. On the other hand, a notorious outlaw of the early California days who was celebrated for his daring, who had killed many people in the various raids and robberies of his band, and who seemed to risk his life as recklessly as though he were a total stranger to fear, nevertheless died in abject terror when he was finally caught and

hanged by the *vigilantes*. Some men, courageous in other matters, are filled with fear by the sight of a harmless snake. Others would on no account be present at a materializing seance, while it would be extremely difficult to induce many ordinarily courageous persons to visit alone at night an unoccupied house which was alleged to be "haunted." But all these fears would vanish with a little more knowledge. The graveyard can have no terror for the man who knows that the dead physical body is as much a separate thing from the dead man who once lived in it as his clothing is and that a cemetery is as harmless as a wardrobe. The outlaw about to be deprived of the physical life he had forfeited to the outraged public would not have suddenly turned coward had he not been ignorant of the fact that there is really no death and that while he was losing his physical body he had a better

one left. The life ahead of him in the astral world would certainly be an undesirable one; but what probably filled him with fear was the possibility of extinction. The man who is afraid of a materialization, or a ghost, would quickly regain his courage if he understood a little more about the facts and laws of the invisible world. He would not run from a wraith if he knew it was but a temporary aggregation of matter as harmless as a puff of smoke. We are mightily amused at a huge elephant going into a paroxysm of terror at sight of a mouse; but it is no more remarkable than the many baseless fears of human beings that arise from various kinds of ignorance.

The action of fear upon the physical body is interesting and instructive and even a superficial examination of it shows that it is extremely detrimental in its effects, while courage is of incalculable value to a person. Sudden

fear contracts the heart, impedes the circulation of the blood and leaves the face blanched and ashen. We are not surprised when the clairvoyant tells us that the color in which this emotion expresses itself is gray. It is quite in keeping with what we know of its physical effects. The emotion of fear appears to be synonymous with contraction. It is a *lessening* of life, and therefore of vitality—a tendency toward separation from the source of life. Fear is the ally of disease and death. It is destructive, disintegrating. Every physician knows this from experience and always does his best to keep fear from the mind of his patient. He knows that if he can kindle hope and revive courage the battle is more than half won.

Because fear means a restriction of the life-forces, a process of life contraction instead of expansion, it is inimical to soul growth. Only in the

atmosphere of serene fearlessness can the inherent divinity come to perfect expression. Any kind or degree of fear is an enemy of growth and progress; and the kinds and degrees are many. People fear poverty, fear disease, fear old age, fear accident, fear possible helplessness, fear loss of position, of power, of social standing,—fear even the opinions of others about them. With many people one or another, or several, of these things gives rise to a mental condition of perpetual unrest. Ignorance, once more, is the cause of all such fear. The difficulty is in the failure to understand facts—to see things in their correct relationship to each other and thus to realize the harmlessness of things which, seen out of their true relationship, are fear inspiring. A man is afraid of a harmless wraith because he erroneously attaches to it a power it does not possess. Just so are all the rest of his fears

groundless, and the objects of them equally powerless to injure him, except through the fear he permits them to inspire in him. To all things over which he worries a man attaches a wholly imaginary power to do him injury and in order to acquire fearlessness he must try to understand nature's methods of evolution and to comprehend why certain unpleasant experiences, such as the unexpected loss of property, accidents on sea or land, friendlessness in old age, etc, come to people. He must come into an understanding of three things: First, that no such experiences can come to any human being unless that person has himself generated the causes that will bring them; second, that when a thing is inevitable it is much less disastrous if calmly faced than if met with paralyzing fear that renders one helpless; and third, that ill-fortune has a lesson to teach that is of more real value to a

man than good fortune could possibly have been in its stead—not that painful things in general are better than pleasant ones, but that they are absolutely necessary to those to whom they come; and were it otherwise they would not, and could not, come to them. A pain in a boy's stomach is not better than the condition of perfect health, but until he learns better than to eat green apples that pain is giving him a lesson that is necessary for his future health and safety. If a thing is inevitable nothing can be gained by frantically trying to escape it; and if it has a lesson to teach that will enable us to avoid greater suffering later on, it is obviously foolish to lament it.

A wise man once said that there are two classes of things about which he refused to worry. One was the things he could not help and the other the things he could. It is quite useless to worry about the one and unnecessary

to worry about the other; and so a little common sense puts the demon of worry entirely out of court.

But there is something more to be said about fear than that it arises from ignorance, for its root is in an ignorance that is closely associated with selfishness. "Perfect love casteth out fear"; and there can be perfect love only where there is absolute unselfishness. The man who reaches a knowledge of the actual unity of all life has no fear. Fear and hatred perish together. A man does not fear himself. When he knows that he is one with all that lives he can have neither hatred nor fear of anything nor can anything have fear of him. The devotee of the orient prays that he may become one who is afraid of nothing and of whom nothing is afraid.

The "perfect love that casteth out fear" also casts out selfishness. A man is no longer thinking about himself but

about others. Instead of worrying for fear he will be friendless and helpless in old age he is thinking altogether about how he can help those who are now poor and friendless; and in that very forgetfulness of himself he is creating the conditions that will make his own old age rich with loyal friendships. On the other hand a man who is trying to accumulate money "to provide for old age" may permit his anxiety to secure plenty of it to lead him into the very things that will make a friendless old age certain.

The thoughtful student of cause and effect, as they operate in human evolution, will not be misled by the foolish idea that by increasing his material possessions he can protect himself against any fate he has earned; nor will he waste time worrying about blunders that he may have made in the past and the resulting unpleasantness that may still be ahead, but will meet the inevi-

table serenely, pondering its lessons when it comes, getting from its severity a Spartan strength and courage and rejoicing that the account now balanced is done with forever. To live in fear of what may be ahead of us as the life-plan unfolds is only to increase whatever misfortune may come and to weaken our powers of resistance at the moment when they are most needed.

To the disciple who has entered fully into the spiritual life nothing matters. He has reached a clear understanding of the fact that a superior intelligence is superintending his evolution and that all the events of this life and his future lives will be adjusted with more careful planning for his welfare than that of a tutor for his pupil or a father for his son; that no useless lesson will be given him, that no unneeded experience can befall him, and that while he may not understand all the events in a program so far-reaching that it includes

his evolution on planes of the universe of which he is wholly ignorant in his waking consciousness, he has no more to fear from it than an infant has in the arms of its loving mother. When this view of evolution is fully comprehended one reaches a mental condition that is higher than courage,—the condition that can properly be called fearlessness. It is not the state in which the will is called upon to enable one to resolutely face danger or death. It is rather the state of consciousness that, realizing there is neither danger nor death and that all things are well with the soul, looks fearless and unafraid upon any change that can come.

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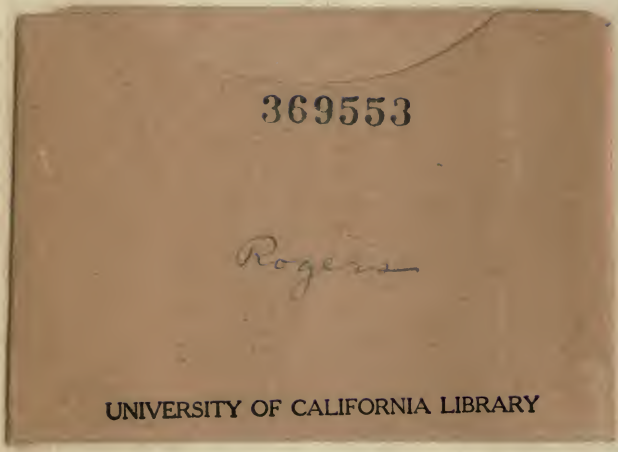
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